



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 28, 2003

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ASMFC Approves Amendment 6 to Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass

Arlington, VA – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has approved Amendment 6 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Striped Bass. Four years in the making, the new Amendment charts the course for management of a healthy and viable striped bass resource. After years of constrained effort, recreational and commercial fishermen will begin to realize the benefits of a restored resource. The recreational harvest has the potential to increase by 10 to 15 percent starting in 2004 (if all coastal states increase to a two fish bag limit). The quota for the coastal commercial fishery will increase by 43 percent in 2003; this increase represents four percent of total striped bass landings from recent years.

To ensure that these increases do not jeopardize the recovery gains of the last two decades, the Amendment implements a control rule that establishes target and threshold levels for the fishing mortality rate and female spawning stock biomass. Essentially, the fishing mortality rate target and threshold mirror that contained in Amendment 5. The female spawning stock biomass target and threshold are new, however, and provide another important indicator of the health of the resource. Currently, the female spawning stock biomass is about 57 million pounds, well above the target of 38.6 million pounds established by Amendment 6. The Amendment has triggers to initiate Management Board action if biomass falls below the target and/or fishing mortality exceeds the target.

Amendment 6 Control Rule

| | FISHING MORTALITY RATE | EXPLOITATION RATE | FEMALE SPAWNING STOCK BIOMASS |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| TARGET | F = 0.30* | 24 percent | 38.6 million pounds |
| THRESHOLD | F = 0.41 | 31 percent | 30.9 million pounds |

**The target fishing mortality rate for the Chesapeake Bay & Albemarle-Roanoke stock is F=0.27 (22% exploitation rate)*

The Amendment also includes a recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce to reopen the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to striped bass fishing after a 13-year closure. This recommendation will initiate a lengthy review and decision-making process by NOAA Fisheries. If reopened, the Management Board committed to annually evaluating the fishery impacts of the harvest within the EEZ so that more conservative measures could be implemented if needed.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

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PR06-03

Copies of the Amendment will be available by the end of March and can be obtained by contacting the Commission at (202)289-6400 or via the website at www.asmfc.org. For more information, please contact Megan Gamble, Striped Bass Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at (202)289-6400 or <mgamble@asmfc.org>.